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KHALEDA ZIA: 15 AUG 1945 – 30 DEC 2025

THE RELUCTANT POLITICIAN WHO SHAPED B'DESH

Jaishankar to attend funeral

Reflecting the importance New Delhi attaches to Khaleda Zia's legacy, foreign minister S Jaishankar will represent India at her funeral. He will travel to Dhaka on Wednesday

Pushed education reforms

Khaleda Zia's tenure as PM restored the parliamentary system and introduced compulsory, free primary education

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

KHALEDA Zia, Bangladesh's first female prime minister, died in Dhaka on Tuesday at the age of 80. For more than three decades, her fierce rivalry with Sheikh Hasina shaped Bangladesh's politics, dividing the nation between two dominant leaders whose personal animosity often mirrored the country's deeper political fault lines.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid rich tributes to Khaleda Zia, recalling her contribution to strengthening bilateral ties.

Born on August 15, 1945 in Dinajpur, then part of British India, Zia entered public life reluctantly. At 15, she married Ziaur Rahman, who would go on to become a central figure in Bangladesh's 1971 liberation struggle and become President in 1977. His assassination in 1981 pushed Zia into politics.

During the nine-year military dictatorship that followed a 1982 coup, she emerged as a prominent face of resistance, boycotting army-backed elections and enduring repeated house arrests. Her uncompromising stance earned her a loyal following. Following the fall of military rule in 1990, the BNP won the general election, and Zia was sworn in as PM in 1991, becoming one of the few elected women in the Muslim world.

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Pak now pokes nose into Kogilu row, EAM reacts

MOHAMMED YACOOB @ Bengaluru

FORGET Kerala, Pakistan too has now commented on the demolition at Kogilu slum in Bengaluru. Pakistan on Monday reportedly issued a press statement through its foreign office, stating that 'Muslim' homes were being razed with the backing of the state. It also commented on the alleged attacks on Christians and termed the developments a 'serious concern'.

Reacting to it, DCM and Bengaluru Development Minister DK Shivakumar said senior national leaders will respond to Pakistan's comments.

In a strong reply, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, "We reject the reported remarks from a country whose abysmal record on this front speaks for itself. Pakistan's horrific and systemic victimisation of minorities of various faiths is a well-established fact. No amount of finger-pointing will obfuscate it."

The DCM, on evictees possessing ID cards from two states, said officials will investigate. P2

Finish Line 2025

As the year draws to a close, we take a deep dive into the events, stories, and faces that mattered

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DK Shivakumar: The challenger | P4

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Assam STF arrests 11 for ties with Jamaat radicals

'All were working under direct orders from Bangladesh groups'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Guwahati

ELEVEN people were arrested in Assam and Tripura for their alleged links with Bangladesh-based fundamentalist groups that were aiming to destabilise the Northeast, police said on Tuesday.

Assam's Special Task Force said the arrests were made for alleged links with Imam Mahmuder Kafila (IMK), an offshoot of Bangladeshi terror group Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), which is banned in India.

Ten among those arrested were nabbed from Assam's Baksa, Barpeta, Chirang and Darrang districts while one was arrested from Tripura's West Tripura district on December 29 and 30.

The IMK was founded in 2018 by Jewel Mahmud alias Sohail, a former JMB member. The STF dossier said senior leaders of JMB, Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), and Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) had issued directions to IMK leadership to activate its Indian modules.

Nasim Uddin, the kingpin, and Junab Ali

Another Hindu man killed in Mymensingh

A Hindu security guard, Bajendra Biswas, was fatally shot at a garment factory in Mymensingh on Monday, marking the third such incident targeting minorities in the country in two weeks

Bangladeshi nationals Umar and Khalid were assigned to coordinate Assam-based activities. One Nasim Uddin alias Tamim of Assam's Barpeta Road is the head of the outfit's Assam cell.

After the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government in Bangladesh in August last year, cadres of JMB, ABT and AQIS were activated, resulting in revival of their ideological influence and Indian networks, including through IMK-linked platforms, the STF said.

"These elements were working under the direct orders from Bangladesh-based groups. Their main aim was to destabilise Assam and the rest of the Northeast," STF chief Partha Sarathi Mahanta said.

Those arrested from Assam were identified as Nasim Uddin alias Tamim (24), Junab Ali (38), Afrahim Hussain (24), Mizanur Rehman (46), Sultan Mehmud (40), Md Siddique Ali (46), Rasidul Aalam (28), Mahibul Khan (25), Sharuk Hussain (22) and Md Dilbar Razak (26), he added. Jagir Miah (33) was nabbed from Tripura.

'Fake' wrestling coach forges federation letter for US visa

FIROZ MIRZA @ Chennai

A bizarre query that could be linked with *kabootar baazi* (immigration racket) left the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) stunned on Tuesday. The consular section of the US Embassy in New Delhi asked the federation about a wrestling coach who has claimed WFI's backing for attending a training camp from January 10 to 28 at Mat Sense Academy (Oregon).

According to the document submitted in the US Embassy, Sandeep, son of Bijender Singh, sought the US visa and submitted WFI's sponsorship on its letterhead as a supporting document. The letter signed by R K Purushotham, WFI's joint secretary, claimed that the federation will bear Sandeep's travel expenses, accommodation and camp fees apart from providing him a daily allowance. Sandeep claimed that he is a wrestling coach at the Sports Authority of India. The sponsorship and official authorisation letter also mentioned three names — Sunil (coach), Anshu (wrestler), and Rajan (physiotherapist) — apart from Sandeep.

"We have informed the US Embassy that the person is neither empanelled as a coach with WFI or the world body, United World Wrestling," WFI chief Sanjay Kumar Singh said. "...as per WFI regulations, only the President, Secretary General, and the Administrative Officers are authorised to sign official correspondence on behalf of the Federation," WFI told the US Embassy in its reply.

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